

Message Text

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ACTION IO-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 AF-04 EUR-08 HA-02 EB-04 L-01
SP-02 OMB-01 TRSE-00 INR-05 CIAE-00 NSCE-00
INRE-00 SSO-00 /048 W
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FM USMISSION GENEVA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4048
AMEMBASSY GABORONE IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY LUSAKA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MASERU PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MBABANE PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L GENEVA 13807

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF, BC, RH
SUBJECT: ICRC ASSISTANCE TO CHILDREN IN BOTSWANA REFUGEE
CAMPS

REF: A. GENEVA 13700; B. STATE 226447; C. GABORONE 2670

1. MISSION HAS NOW RECEIVED DRAFT SPEAKING NOTE FROM
MAC INNES, WHICH HE STATES HE WOULD HAVE USED WITH ICRC
HAD HE BEEN INSTRUCTED TO SPEAK ONLY ON BEHALF OF U.K.
HOWEVER, HE NOW EXPECTS TO RECEIVE AUTHORIZATION MOMEN-
TARILY TO MAKE JOINT APPROACH WITH US, AND WOULD APPRE-
CIATE RECEIVING ANY SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS TO DRAFT.

TEXT FOLLOWS:

QUOTE: ON THE BASIS OF OUR OBSERVATION OF CONDITIONS ON
THE GROUND IN BOTSWANA AND OUR CONTACTS WITH OFFICIALS OF
THE BOTSWANA GOVERNMENT AND THE INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES'
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REPRESENTATIVES IN THAT COUNTRY, WE BELIEVE THAT IMPROVE-
MENTS COULD BE MADE IN THE CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR
SCREENING REFUGEES ON ARRIVAL. THIS WOULD MAKE IT POS-
SIBLE TO REGISTER THEIR WHEREABOUTS AND FACILITATE CONTACTS
WITH, OR THEIR RETURN TO, THEIR HOMES IF THEY SO WISH. WE
ARE PARTICULARLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE REGISTRATION OF CHILD-
REN WHO, WE BELIEVE, SHOULD BE ABLE TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH

THEIR PARENTS. PUBLIC OPINION IN OUR COUNTRIES HAS BEEN DISTURBED BY REPORTS THAT SOME YOUNG CHILDREN HAVE BEEN ABDUCTED AGAINST THEIR WILL. THIS CAN BE IN NO PARTY'S INTEREST, SINCE IT AGGRAVATES THE PROBLEMS OF LOOKING AFTER THE BONA FIDE REFUGEES. IT ALSO INFLECTS NEEDLESS DISTRESS ON FAMILIES ALREADY SUFFERING FROM OTHER EFFECTS OF WAR. THE APPARENT USE OF INTIMIDATION ON BOTH SIDES MAKES IT ALL THE MORE IMPORTANT THAT THE OPPORTUNITY OF THE REFUGEES' ARRIVAL IN THE CAMPS IN BOTSWANA BE USED TO ASCERTAIN THEIR TRUE WISHES AND TO DO THE BEST FOR THEM IN THE LIGHT OF THESE. IT WOULD BE USEFUL IF EFFORTS COULD ALSO BE MADE TO ALLOW CONTACT BETWEEN THE CHILDREN WITH THEIR PARENTS EITHER STILL IN RHODESIA OR IN OTHER REFUGEE CENTERS IN BOTSWANA.

WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE MOST APPROPRIATE FOR THE ICRC, AS A HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATION WHICH IS ALREADY INVOLVED IN LOOKING AFTER RHODESIAN REFUGEES AND WHICH HAS UNDISPUTED INTERNATIONAL STANDING, TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE IN THIS FIELD. WE THINK THAT THE NEW CAMP AT DUKWE OFFERS THE MOST PROMISING PROSPECT FOR MAKING A START (ALTHOUGH IT SEEMS THAT ZAPU HAD SO FAR REFUSED TO ALLOW ICRC TO CARRY OUT A REGISTRATION OF PEOPLE IN THIS CAMP), AND THAT THE BOTSWANA AUTHORITIES WOULD GIVE THEIR SUPPORT AND COOPERATION. THIS WOULD PROVIDE A VERY WORTHWHILE ADDITION TO THE ICRC'S INVALUABLE TRACING SERVICE.

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WE NATURALLY ARE READY TO HELP IN ANY PRACTICABLE WAY, THOUGH IT IS NOT FOR US TO INVOLVE OURSELVES IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE CAMPS.

WE APPRECIATE THE POLITICAL SENSITIVITY OF SOME OF THE ISSUES INVOLVED BUT WE BELIEVE THAT THE HUMAN NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE THEMSELVES, PARTICULARLY PROTECTION FROM HUNGER, DISEASE AND FEAR, SHOULD BE PARAMOUNT.

OUR APPROACH DOES NOT IMPLY ANY CHANGE IN OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS HELPING CAMPS IN ZAMBIA, OR ELSEWHERE, WHICH ARE RUN BY THE PATRIOTIC FRONT. WE SHALL CONTINUE TO HELP WHEREVER THE NEED EXISTS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH OUR PRESENT CRITERIA (I.E., THAT THE MONEY SHOULD NOT BE USED TO FURTHER THE AIMS OF ANY ARMED GROUPS, E.G. FOR MILITARY PURPOSES OR INDOCTRINATION).

WE INTEND TO KEEP IN TOUCH ALSO WITH THE UNHCR ON THIS MATTER AND HOPE THE ICRC WILL TOO. BUT WE WOULD BE VERY GRATEFUL IF THE ICRC COULD TAKE THE LEAD.

2. MISSION WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS FROM ADDRESSEES CONCERNING FOREGOING TEXT BY

IMMEDIATE CABLE ASAP. TEXT APPEARS GENERALLY ACCEPTABLE
TO MISSION IN TONE AND CONTENT, ALTHOUGH IN SPEAKING
IN FIRST PARAGRAPH OF IMPROVING "CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS
FOR SCREENING", AND OF USING "OPPORTUNITY OF REFUGEES
ARRIVAL IN CAMPS IN BOTSWANA...TO ASCERTAIN THEIR TRUE
WISHES", IT SEEMS TO DIRECT ITS THRUST TOWARD NEW
ARRIVALS ONLY, FAILING TO ADDRESS PROBLEM OF THOSE
WHO HAVE ALREADY ENTERED CAMPS AND MAY HAVE HAD SUB-
SEQUENT CHANGE OF HEART. VANDEN HEUVEL

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